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SUBJECT: SUBJECT : OVERVIEW OF FRENCH AID TO THE REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

11. (U) Summary: In a detailed press interview, Nicolas Normand, French Ambassador to the ROC, described the major areas of GOF aid efforts in the ROC. Currently, the GOF has a multi-faceted aid program that focuses on intervention in infrastructure development, cultural advocacy, environmental issues, professional training and education, defense training, study abroad programs, and support for local projects and NGOs. End Summary.

12. (U) In a lengthy press interview, done in conjunction with France's Bastille Day celebration and in anticipation of the 49th anniversary of Congolese independence August 15, French Ambassador Nicolas Normand outlined the major subject heads of French assistance.

3.(U) Infrastructure comprises a large proportion of GOF aid to ROC, with loan support towards projects such as a 20 billion CFA loan, with supplementary components from the European Investment Bank and the African development bank, to improve infrastructure at the port of Pointe Noire. (COMMENT: This loan is clearly and explicitly linked to the container terminal concession granted for a period of 27 years to the French company Groupe Bollore. END COMMENT.) Other GOF efforts also include a study to assess sanitation standards in the Congo River.

13. (U) Environmental aid focuses on forest preservation, training of "ecoguards" to deter poaching, and technical support for climate change negotiations. The GOF provided a 2 billion CFA grant to establish Sangha National Park, which encompasses areas of the Central African Republic, Cameroon, and northern ROC. The French Development Agency also provided a 3.5 billion CFA loan to the GOC to improve management of forests in the southern region.

14. (U) GOF Professional training and education efforts in the ROC include establishment of two professional centers that provide training on public works and industrial maintenance in Brazzaville and Pointe Noire, respectively. These efforts stem from a 2007 project agreement which allocated 4 billion FCA towards these projects, which are aimed at debuting before 2010.

15. (U) Health efforts of the GOF in ROC include efforts to support the Executive Secretary of the National Fight against AIDS, specifically with technical assistance personnel in the HIV/AIDS office, and provision of salaries for the French Red Cross to employ personnel at mobile treatment centers for HIV/AIDS in Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire. Upcoming health projects include training for nurse and nurse assistants, as well as a feasibility study for a 4 billion CFA project to increase human resources in the ROC health sector.

16. (U) French cultural advocacy efforts include management of two French cultural centers, in Brazzaville and Pointe Noire, which provide media centers, library resources, and cultural events to the general public. A fund of 600,000 Euro and six staff manage these centers. (COMMENT: There is also

cost-sharing with the Congolese government in the form of matching funding from the newspaper "les depeches de Brazzaville" which is controlled by the Congolese government. END COMMENT.) GOF educational outreach includes scholarships for sixty Congolese students (who are among the 3,000 congolese students in France) and an academic advising service available at the French cultural centers.

17. (U) GOF aid efforts extend training and support to ROC defense and police sectors, with thirteen French officers and enlisted men posted in ROC and seven large projects in partnership with the ROC Ministry of Defense. Most projects involve training of military, army, and police, but the GOF is also establishing a school for military engineering that will be run by the Congolese army as well as the formation of a Congolese regional reserve force in partnership with C.E.E.A.C.

18. (U) Other GOF aid efforts in ROC include small grants support for civil society, NGO groups, and municipal projects. The GOF currently also provides support for maintenance of navigable waterways and river transportation.

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